



# Decorah Metronet up and running

By Sarah Strandberg

The Decorah Metronet is live, and three of its six anchor members are now communicating with each other via the fiber optic network.

The city of Decorah, Winneshiek County and the Decorah School District are up and running, and the other three members, Luther College, Winneshiek Medical Center and Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, will soon be part of the network.

"We're working on obtaining Internet access that would allow everyone (the other partners) to jump on," said Decorah City Manager

Chad Bird.

"It's nice the program is wrapping up, at least the construction phase, as we move toward the utilization phase. It continues to be an attribute for our community. You have six entities coming together for a common purpose and working for the betterment of our community," Bird said.

The Metronet will include 18 interconnected, end-point locations: Decorah City Hall, Winneshiek County Courthouse, Wellington Place, the county's Freeport shop, Decorah High School, Decorah Middle School, John Cline Elementary, Keystone Area Education

Agency, Luther's Preus Library, Decorah Public Library, Decorah school administration building, the county's Smith Building, St. Benedict School, Decorah Wastewater Treatment Plant, Decorah Water Department, West Side Elementary, Winneshiek Medical Center and Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission.

Eventually, the Metronet will be able to provide opportunities for businesses and individuals, he said.

"I see the Metronet fiber being an economic development tool for our community -- having it in place and having excess fiber available for the commercial industrial seg-

ment of our economy. I can think of technology heavy business -- call centers or data centers -- that might appreciate having excess fiber capacity," Bird told Decorah Newspapers last week.

Planning for the Metronet, which consists of 144 strands of fiber encircling the city, began several years ago. Decorah was awarded a \$520,000 Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant in November of 2010, and the six anchor members equally provid-

*Metronet*

Continued on page A-3

## Metronet

Continued from front page

ed a local match totaling \$220,000 for the project to go forward. It will provide increased communication abilities for the businesses and organizations connected to it.

Bird explained the Decorah Metronet was the sub-recipient of the BTOP grant, which was awarded to the Iowa Communications Network as part of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act.

The Metronet will allow the anchor partners the ability to store data off-site and at multiple locations, according to Bird.

"There is a lot of redundancy available," he said.

"It's a great asset for our community. There will come a time when we will be able to hook up specific businesses and specific homes. We have a long way to go before that happens. We need to service the six (partner) entities first," Bird said.